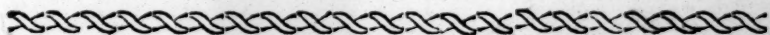




THREE
DISCOURSES,
DELIVERED AT THE
ORDINATION
OF
THE REV. JONATHAN EVANS,
AT FOLESHILL, NEAR COVENTRY,
APRIL 4, 1797.



[Price ONE SHILLING.]



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THE FIRST, ON
The Nature of a Christian Church, &c.

BY
THE REV. J. BREWER.

THE SECOND, ON
The proper Disposition of a Christian Minister,

BY
THE REV. G. BURDER.

AND THE THIRD, ON
The Duties of Members of Churches,

BY
THE REV. R. LITTLE.

TOGETHER
With the Confession of Faith,

BY
THE REV. J. EVANS.

COVENTRY:

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and Mr. BUTTON, Pager-noster-Row, London.

1209
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Order of the Services.

The Rev. JOHN HEWITT, of Bedworth, prayed, and read the Scriptures.

The Rev. JEHŌIADA BREWER, of Birmingham, delivered the Introductory Discourse, and asked Mr. EVANS the usual Questions.

The Call of the Church, to Mr. EVANS, was read, and publicly recognised, and his Acceptance of their Call was also declared.

The Rev. GEORGE BURDER, of Coventry, delivered the Charge to the Minister.

The Rev. ROBERT LITTLE, of Birmingham, preached the Sermon to the People ; and

The Rev. THOMAS SAUNDERS, of Coventry, concluded with Prayer.

P R E F A C E.

THIS being the first settlement of a Gospel Ministry in the place, the service of the day is published, at the request of the Church and Congregation; in order to refresh their memories with what they then heard, and to perpetuate the pleasing event to posterity.

It may be necessary, briefly to state the origin and progress of the good work amongst us, for the information of the Lord's people, that they may unite with us in praise to God, through whose blessing we have been so far succeeded.

In 1782, the Parish of *Foleshill*, within two miles of *Coventry*, (which is very extensive and populous, consisting principally of Ribbon-Weavers) was without the means of grace, when the present Minister, concerned for the happiness of souls, perishing for lack of knowledge, was induced to attempt the preaching of the Word amongst them. This was done the two first years in private houses; and, when the season would permit, in the open air, in various parts of the Parish, and adjacent villages, which are numerous and populous; and though considerable opposition was made, yet good was done. After this time, a building was purchased in the centre of the Parish, and made convenient for public worship.

The

The place was afterwards much enlarged, but being still too small to contain the congregation, a piece of land was bought, and a Chapel erected, 50 feet by 40, with three commodious Galleries; which is now comfortably filled.

In February, 1796, a Christian Society was formed, which has been since gradually increasing.

The good effects of Itinerating have been so conspicuous in this neighbourhood, not only in calling many out of darkness into marvellous light, but in moralizing others, that the greatest enemies of religion around us, are constrained to acknowledge the utility of the work. This plan is still pursued every Sabbath Evening, and occasionally on the Week Days, during the Summer Months. From the success which has attended the work here, it is hoped, that Ministers in general, will be stimulated to pursue the same line of conduct, in their respective situations; and although they may meet with the disapprobation of the lukewarm and indifferent professor, the work, under God, will more than compensate for the contempt they may experience in the prosecution of it; since nothing can be of equal importance with the glory of God, and the salvation of souls.

While we are laudably endeavouring to evangelize the Heathen abroad, let us not forget that we have Heathens at home. May the Lord diffuse the knowledge of his truth throughout the earth, until "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and all flesh shall see the Salvation of God."

Introductory Discourse, &c.

MEN and BRETHREN !

YOU are met together to-day, upon a most serious and honourable occasion ; an occasion so truly important, that perhaps, the mind of God himself is not more intently occupied about any sublunary transaction, than about that which is the subject of your present meeting. You are met together for the grand purpose of establishing in this place, a Church of the living God ; in comparison with which, the establishment of an empire is a trifle. Empires have been made for the Church. They have been suffered to rise into being, to rear their ambitious heads to the clouds, to flourish for a course of ages, and then expire. But the Church of the living God, whose existence is almost coeval with time itself, has seen the rise and fall of empires not a few. It has often beheld those, into whose hands the sceptre of dominion had been put, forming a combination against its best interest. It has often been astonished with the cry of Rase it, rase it, even to the foundations thereof ! But it has witnessed the discomfiture of all their designs ; it has seen their glory sink in everlasting night, and their very existence perish for ever ; while the little stone, cut out of the mountain without hands, not only remains, but increases, and in a short time will become *a great mountain, and fill the whole earth*, Dan. ii. 44.

It is truly, a consideration calculated to warm and animate the most sluggish soul, that the very spot, which we now occupy, was a few years ago a pasture for the beasts of the field, and to-day it is a fold for the flock of God. To-day,

eigns

it is a place, which the Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, ~~designs~~ to consecrate with his indisputable sanction, and to acknowledge as the place of his abode. Verily we may say, the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose, it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice, even with joy and singing. This has God wrought. And I doubt not, but you, who have been accessary to the effectuating of this good work, are willing to say, Not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of God. Jehovah's arm has been made bare; his power has been revealed, and to him we must ascribe the glory.

When I consider, that a very few years ago, ye were all as sheep going astray, every one of you turning to his own way : and the ways of sinners are not the safest, the end is always death.—When I consider this, and contemplate the sovereign goodness of God, who put it into the heart of our good brother, and your present pastor, to come among you, and, in imitation of his divine Master, to seek and to save that which was lost, I must conclude, you will, all of you, think very gratefully of him, for the benevolence of his intention. But when I consider the consequence of his ardent and honest efforts ; when I see, as I do this day, many immortal souls, who a little while ago were dead in trespasses and sins, really alive to God, boldly appearing on his side, and making their public avowal before many witnesses, that they are not ashamed to acknowledge the Lord Jesus, I feel confident, that you will esteem him very highly in love for his work's sake.

The nature of our present transactions may require a particular explanation ; and, all things considered, a more than usual elucidation may be necessary. Existing circumstances will, with every candid mind, be a very sufficient apology for the very plain and ample detail that I am now going to make .

You

You, my brethren, of this place, are this day doing, what is commonly called, *forming a church*; though, as will appear in the sequel, this statement is not just; for you are already, a church perfectly formed, and organized; and are now only making an exhibition to the public, of what has already been done.—For the sake of exemplification, we will exercise our inquiries about the following articles.

The Word CHURCH.

Through the force of education, the influence of party, or the absence of information, the human mind is capable of perverting the best things, and of mistaking the plainest. Suppose we were to repair to those parts of Europe, where a profession of christianity is assumed. Suppose we were to employ our inquiries for the purpose of ascertaining the precise scriptural sense of the word CHURCH. If we were to go to Portugal, Spain, Italy, Hungary, some parts of Germany, and *what once was* Poland, and there propose our question, WHAT IS A CHURCH? The answer would be: Something, composed of splendid edifices, in which, splendid ceremonies are performed, by persons in splendid habits, who are called Cardinals, Archbishops, Bishops, Abbots, Canons, &c. at the head of which presides, a sovereign pontiff, styled the Pope, to whose care are committed the uncontrolled government of this church, together with the keys of heaven and hell. And all this *as by Law established*; and the whole supported by the involuntary contributions of all the people, whether they approve of it or not. This, brethren, is the meaning of the word CHURCH in most parts of the continent.

For the sake of further information, suppose we were to put the same question in that part of our own island south of the Tweed, and commonly called England. Suppose we were here to ask the bulk of our countrymen, WHAT IS A CHURCH? Would not the answer be, A building, with the altar

altar end of it invariably towards the east; in which a prescribed form of prayer is read, by a person, who must indispensably be dressed in a white garment? The government of this church is executed by persons called Archbishops, Bishops, Deans, Archdeacons, Prebendaries, Canons, Chancellors, Vicars-general, Surrogates, &c. And the various services performed by those who bear the names of Rectors, Vicars, and Curates. Above all of whom presides, with supreme authority, the Monarch of the land, whether King or Queen. And all this *as by law established. Cætera desunt.*

For the purpose of collecting all the information possible, for in the multitude of counsellors there is safety, we will cross the Tweed, and go into that part of our island, formerly called Scotland, but now North Britain, and there propose our usual question, WHAT IS A CHURCH? An honest Caledonian would reply, in the modification thereof: a difference subsists between a church here, and a church with you in England; but in the essential constitution, they are one and the same. Indeed, we may hear one, who understood these things very well, an inhabitant of South Britain, giving his opinion*: "The Presbyterian Church in North Britain, is established by the very same authority, and rests upon the same law, as the Episcopal Church in South Britain."

Having proceeded thus far in our inquiries, here we might rest satisfied, assuring ourselves, that such a happy identity in first principles, ought to be sufficient to substantiate the object of our investigation: and here we would rest satisfied, if it were not for the recollection of a well-known maxim, *The Bible, the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants*†. To this divine authority, every good man will feel ambitious to submit. Under the influence of this sacred maxim it would be criminal not to ask, what the Bible says. With
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* The Rev. Micaiah's Towgood's Letters.

† Chillingworth's Rel. Prot.

all becoming reverence we will here put our general question, WHAT IS A CHURCH?

Here we find, by the etymology of the word itself, that it means *an assembly*, or gathering together of any number of persons. It is so used, *Acts* xix. 32, 40. where the word, which we read *assembly*, is the very word rendered *Church* in other places: and when used in a religious sense, it means a number of persons assembled for a religious purpose. It always means persons, and never any thing else. Hence we read of Churches in houses, *Rom.* xvi. 5. *1 Cor.* xvi. 19. Churches being cherished, *Eph.* v. 29. Churches being persecuted, *Acts* viii. 1. Churches travelling, *Acts* xv. 3. Churches praying, *Acts* xii. 5. &c. Terms appropriate to persons, and not to things. It would be less monstrous to call the moon a mountain, or the sun a lake, than it would be to associate with the term Church any idea but that of persons.

Having cleared our way thus far, and shewn, that by the word Church, we are to understand *an assembly of persons formed for a religious purpose*; no matter where; in a cottage, or a palace; in a cathedral, or on a mountain; in St. Peter's at Rome, or in the meeting-house at Foleshill; our next inquiry ought to be, what kind of persons are those who constitute the church? I mean the church of the living God. It is obvious, even to an infant in observation, that they are not those who compose a nation. A nation of christians we have not yet seen, though we have seen multitudes of national christians. A right to be a member of a christian church belongs to no man by birth. Every man is born free, but no man is born a christian. Wretched and degrading, must be the situation of a serious minister of the gospel, who is obliged to admit without exception, both the clean and the unclean into the church wherein he presides. A prohibition existed under the former dispensation, that no stranger uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, should enter the sanctuary of the Lord, *Ezek.* xlv. 9. The New Testament
draws

draws decisively the line of discrimination between the church and the world, *John xvii. 14. They are not of the world, as I am not of the world.* Ungodly men have no greater right to be members of the church on earth, than they have to be inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. That church, wherever it be found, whether on the continent, or on our island ; among the Episcopalians of South Britain, or the Presbyterians of North Britain ; or whether among the Conformists, or Non-conformists of either (for names cannot change the nature of things) that church, which admits ungodly members into its community, is casting a gross insult upon the dignity of christianity, and derogating from the honour of the Lord Jesus Christ. Such a church is either radically wrong, or wickedly managed. It is chargeable with a crime of no common magnitude ; a crime, pregnant with evils surpassing calculation. Fearful exemplifications of this abuse of our mercies are every where to be seen. I feel my heart disposed to drop the vail, and conceal from your sight the memorials of our disgrace ; but *the attempt would be vain ; they are too enormous to be hid.* Ah, Brethren ! how many places present themselves to our view, which were once the glory of our land ; places, to which our pious forefathers went up to worship, with the high praises of God in their mouth, and his Spirit in their hearts : Now *Ichabod* is written upon their walls ; and whilst the impious spectator insultingly says, Is this mount Zion, the joy of the whole earth, the city of the great king ? the man of God, the faithful follower of Jesus, in the grief of his soul exclaims, O that mine head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the daughter of my people !

Whatever secondary means may have led to this melancholy end, the first cause is certain. It is in vain to attribute it to the effects of another doctrine. The incorporation of ungodly men with the church of Christ has been its ruin. Men have dreamt of an hereditary religion. A religion

ligion transmitted from their fathers and not from God. It has too greatly obtained amongst us ; and all serious men, whose hearts are alive to God, lament, bitterly lament, the consequences.

Men and Brethren, let me earnestly entreat you to pay the utmost attention to this part of my subject : your glory, as a church of Christ, depends upon it. As you value your own comfort, the happiness of your minister, and the honour of the Son of God, never, upon any account, admit an ungodly, I mean an unconverted man, into your community. Consider nothing as an equivalent for religion. Should any one propose himself for admission among you, as rich and wise as Solomon himself, yet destitute of the true grace of God, shut your doors against him ; he will be at best but an Achan in the camp.

Search the scriptures, examine the New Testament ; where do you find an instance which gives the most distant intimation of any man being a member of a christian church, who was not a supposed subject of the grace of God ? Who composed the churches at Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, Colosse, and Thessalonica ? Read the introductory parts of the apostle's epistles to those respective places, and you will discover they were *Saints, in God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

All those, who give themselves up to a church, should act upon the principle of the Macedonians, *2 Cor. viii. 5. they first gave their own selves to the Lord, and then to each other by the will of God.* Let this rule be written upon all your hearts. Inviolably abide by this principle. You will hereby be a blessing to one another ; you may then expect peace within your walls, and prosperity in your souls.

Should you ask, What makes men saints ? we reply ; not a form of saintship. From such turn away. It is possible for a man to be as orthodox in his opinions, as the sun is bright, and as upright in his public conduct as an angel,

and yet not a saint. I say *it is possible*, and the reason is evident. God looks to the heart, and requires truth in the inward part. There the work must begin. "God abhors the sacrifice, where not the heart is found." Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God, *John* iii. 5. Circumcision availeth nothing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature, *Gal.* vi. 15. Nothing less than a divine change of mind, can make a man a saint: for who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?

Men of this kind, are the essential materials. They enter into a confederation, according to the laws of the New Testament, and thereby become a christian church. Our next inquiries must be respecting

The OFFICERS of a CHURCH.

When we read such names as are found in the vocabulary of some churches; those hard names, some of which you have already heard, and refer to the New Testament, we seem a little surprised, and conclude there must be a mistake somewhere. After we have searched, and researched the faithful and full documents of scripture; we find only *two orders* of officers in the primitive church, *Bishops* and *Deacons*. Read Paul's introduction of the epistle to the Philippians; it addresses the *Bishops* and *Deacons*: not one officer more is mentioned, or as much as hinted at. Read the same person's epistles to Timothy and Titus, and he strictly keeps to the same number still. *Bishops and Deacons were the only officers of apostolic times*. We do not hear a word about a Pope, a Cardinal, an Archbishop, a Dean, &c. &c. As this may appear rather novel to some of you, our next inquiry ought to be, whether such officers were adequate to all the essential purposes of a christian church: and in order to do this, we should attempt to ascertain, as accurately as possible, the particular occupation of each.

A BISHOP.

A BISHOP.

The word simply means an *overseer*. You need not understand Greek to know this : The translators of the New Testament have told you all about it, in *Acts* xx. They render the very word, which in every other place they have rendered *Bishop*, by that of *overseer*. They had, no doubt, their reasons for so doing ; and I dare say they were good ones too. In this sense of the word, Joseph was a Bishop in Potiphar's house, *Gen.* xxxix. 4. He was an overseer ; or, as we say, he overlooked things.

The office then of a christian Bishop is to inspect, and take care of the spiritual concerns of the church. So Peter represents them, 1 Epist. v. 2. as men who had taken the *oversight* of the flock of God. They paid attention to their souls ; and administered all necessary possible help to them. This is a Bishop's office, and the whole of it ; and if he aims at any thing more, he intrudes himself into a province, foreign from that assigned to him by the great Head of the church. You perceive, Brethren, I am speaking of a *New Testament Bishop*.

But then you will say, There were also Elders, and Pastors in the apostolic church. True, there were, but they were all one and the same with Bishops. This is a plain case, and our evidence is at hand, *Acts* xx. When the Apostle Paul called together the Elders of the church of Ephesus, at Miletus, with a heart burning with love to immortal souls, he thus addressed them, *ver.* 28. Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you *overseers*—*Bishops*. Now this is plain, and who can mistake it ? Paul addresses *Elders*, and calls them Bishops. Every child must make this just inference : Therefore *an Elder is a Bishop*. If you want further evidence, consult *Titus* i. 5, 6, 7.

Thus, you see, a New Testament Elder and Bishop were one and the same office; and the same may be proved of a Pastor, from 1 *Pet.* v. 2. So that our Brother, your Minister, is to all intents and purposes, by the authority of God, and the laws of Scripture, in New Testament language, *the Bishop, or overseer of this place*; and I doubt not but he will prove faithful to his trust, by looking well after your spiritual concerns.—The next thing we have to attend to, is the word

DEACON.

This was the only other office of apostolic authority. The original design of which, was to serve tables, *Acts* vi. The table of the poor—to receive the contributions of the church for the support of the poor saints, and to apply them for that purpose; and it is probable, that their office extended to the management of all temporal concerns. Preaching was no part of their office. A Deacon might have been an occasional preacher, but he was not a preacher, in consequence of his office as a Deacon.

Men and Brethren, you may ask, Was there no other office? I answer, No; there was no other office. The apostle Paul was a very faulty writer, if, when he addressed an orderly and respectable church, he should have mentioned some expressly by their office, and have omitted others. In *Philippians* i. 1. he writes to the saints, with the Bishops and Deacons. We may be certain he included the whole church, and yet he says they were only these. First, SAINTS—the Church—the People. Secondly, BISHOPS—their Preachers. Thirdly, DEACONS—their Clerks—to take care of their secular affairs. These were quite sufficient for every purpose of utility; they wanted no more; more would have been an incumbrance. Most societies require a chairman and a clerk, and most societies have them; and in general they do very well with them. Pause for a moment, and inquire, what other officers are wanted.

For

For the purpose of ostentatious parade, we may form a Consistory, and decorate it with Tiaras, Cardinals Red Hats, Mitres, Crofters, &c. but for the purpose of saving immortal souls, we can do very well without them.

Thus you see what beautiful simplicity marks the institutes of the gospel ; and we might expect it to be so, as the work of God. All his works are simple. The more complex the construction of anything, the more of man is in it ; the more simple, the more like God. When you see a church formed upon a complex principle, at least, question the divinity of its original. There is beauty in all simplicity, whether natural or moral ; and, possibly, simplicity is an essential part of beauty. Of the designs of the most High, we may say, O Lord, how beautiful are thy works, in wisdom hast thou made them all. And, in the elegant language of Dr. Watts, of the church, we may emphatically say,

“ How decent and how wise !
How glorious to behold !
Beyond the pomp that charms the eyes,
And rights adorned with gold.”

Our attention in the next place must be employed about

POWER.

This extends to two articles.—First, the appointment of officers. Such a thing exists in some churches, that bears the name of *patronage*, whereby one man has a right to appoint for a whole parish, what kind of a minister he pleases. Ye, my plain brethren, are unread in the arts and tricks that abound in the world. Ye have never heard what sophistry may adduce in support of the worst of things : for this very reason, in most cases, you are the fittest judges of what is right. A good deal of honesty, and a little common sense, can do great things. We will now state a supposed case : Should your church be destitute of a minister, you

you would then consequently want another ; and if it so came to pass, that a man, who knew nothing of you, nor you of him, should send you just what kind of a minister he pleased ; insisting, that whether you approved of him or not, *he must* be your minister. How would you feel ? Methinks I see indignation in your very countenances. We will again suppose, that in similar circumstances, the man, to whom you must apply for a ghostly guide, should be the 'Squire of the parish, not always the wisest, or the most religious man in the parish. As a reward for services faithfully rendered, he appoints some daring member of the jovial chace ; some pious tenant of his festive board, to the important trust. These, Brethren, are very serious things, and such as by their own importance demand an inquiry, and therefore we will again refer to our usual authority, and ask, What saith the scripture in this case also ?

We find Jesus Christ giving this very serious advice to his hearers : *Take heed what ye hear.* Every one must see the evident implication of this passage, and will thus reason upon it :—If I am cautioned to take heed *what I hear*, it supposes *a right in me to chuse whom I will hear.* It is evident that this mode obtained in the apostolic church. “ When the apostasy of Judas called for another, to take part of the ministry, from which he fell by transgression, we find, in this eminent instance, the whole regulated according to the will, and by the authority of the *people*,” Acts i.

In regard to the office of a Deacon, the Apostle acknowledged the power of election to be in the same hands, Acts vi. The twelve called the multitude of the Disciples and said, Look ye out seven men, of honest report, &c. “ The Apostles did no more than declare the *will of the people*, by formally setting apart those whom they had previously chosen *.” Thus the Scripture states it, and thus it ought to be. The contrary is the very soul of folly and cruelty. If any of us had the bulk of our property depending upon
the

* An introductory discourse at the ordination of the Rev. Mr. Alliot, by J. Brewer.

the issue of a suit at law, how hard should we consider our lot, if we were compelled to commit the management of it to the hands of a man, of whose legal knowledge, and forensic abilities, we had the meanest opinion? Or else, suppose, when languishing upon a bed of sickness; convinced of the absolute necessity of applying for relief to the healing art, we find ourselves obliged to trust our very existence, to the treatment of a person as ignorant of the properties of medicine, as a deaf man is of the power of music, it would be a lamentable case. But how infinitely more lamentable must it be, to trust our souls, our everlasting all, to the direction and care of a man, unconcerned about his own soul, and unacquainted with the method of saving another's! The compassionate friend of sinners has kindly ordered it otherwise.

The second thing, to which the article of power relates, is the government of its own internal and proper concerns. Our question is, who has authority in these matters? If inhabitants of North Britain, must it be committed to Synods, or General Assemblies; or, if inhabitants of South Britain, is it reposed within an ecclesiastical court? If a subject of dispute arises among you in this place, how is it to be settled? Are you to go to Lichfield, and leave the decision to the desultory litigations of proctors? Or what are you to do? Let a Bishop speak. Hear him! He is a Bishop of the established church of England. "I readily grant, that there was a confederacy of discipline established amongst the individuals of every church*." He means primitive churches. And again; "I look upon the right of private judgment, in every concern respecting God and ourselves, as superior to the control of human authority†." This is enough—This is plain—You all understand it; and it is just as it ought to be. But to "err is human:"
and

* Bishop Watson's Apology for Christianity, in Letters to E. Gibbon, Esq; 5th edit. page 107.

and with whatever reverence we may look up to a *Bishop*, yet, as it is possible, even for a Bishop to be mistaken, we will just ask what faith the scripture?—First of all; supposing an offence to arise in any particular church, it leaves the arbitration of it to themselves, *Matt.* xviii. 15, 16, 17. Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.—Hear the solemn sanction of this authority from the great Lord of conscience himself, *ver.* 18. Verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose, shall be loosed in heaven. Strictly correspondent with his divine Master is the language in which the Apostle Paul treats the same subject, *1 Cor.* v. 12. — *Do not ye judge them that are within?* Every individual church of Christ has a tribunal within itself, to which every member is amenable; and which possesses full power to regulate its own particular concerns.

Some of you may, in the next place ask, In the hands of what particular characters in a christian community does this power lie? I answer, In the hands of no one man, or set of men, but it is possessed by the *whole*. A generous equality, in all religious concerns, reigns throughout the family of Jesus Christ, *Matt.* xx. 25. The princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they who are great exercise authority over them; *but it shall not be so among you*. No, ye are all Brethren, and *one* is your Master, *Matt.* xxiii. 8. This principle is neither destructive of order, nor hostile to subordination. In every society men will be found, who, in consequence of superior information, are better qualified than others to take the lead in public affairs. Such men are an acquisition to a church; and

and all good and wise men in that church, will be thankful for them, and most gladly invest them with that authority, the exercise of which may be for the glory of God. But still remember, the people, who gave them their power, may take it away when they please.

But it will most probably be urged, that though none of the ordinary members may possess a pre-eminence above others, yet assuredly the minister does. Yes, my Brethren, a minister of the everlasting gospel is the most pre-eminent character under heaven; men cannot think too highly of him. Men, who know the value of such a character, will esteem him very highly in love for his work's sake; and think him worthy of double honour; and I therefore entreat you to set the highest value upon *your* minister. Love him—pray for him—serve him—do all you can to make him happy.—He is your best friend—He has been the appointed instrument of saving your souls: and I doubt not, but through eternity you will bless God upon his account. But yet, as a member of your church, he possesses no more authority than the meanest person among you. He can do nothing, in regard to your internal concerns, without your consent.

He has but one voice. In all your decisions, he is but an unit: nor will an upright, generous man, wish to be any thing else. With pity he looks down upon a fellow being, who, in the plenitude of his pontifical authority, considers himself as a creature of a higher order. The faithful minister of the glorious gospel of the blessed God, will aim at no dignity among you superior to that of a brother, and your servant for Christ's sake. Superiority, notwithstanding all this, will be attached to such a character. If he be an honest man, he has endeavoured to make himself an able minister of the New Testament; he has paid particular attention to the things of God; the laws of his house have been the subject of his special studies. By his habits and his opportunities (I arrogate no improper consequence to myself, or

my brethren), he will be better qualified to judge of those things which may prove to be the subjects of your inquiries, than others among you ; consequently you will feel for him eminent respect ; look up to him with reverence, and treat his opinions with peculiar deference. In point of right, he is no man's superior ; but unless he be ignorant or idle (and if so he has nothing to do with the ministry), he will possess acquired superiority.

Nothing but the particular nature of your circumstances, can sufficiently apologize for occupying so much of your time. One article more comes under our consideration, and that is

ORDINATION.

How liable are we to mistake the plainest things ! what strange sentiments have been associated with the term Ordination ! It has been considered, as a something, to confer which has been the sole prerogative of ministers. I mean even among *Dissenters*. I hope, Brethren, you are better taught. Your minister is already ordained, and you are the ordainers, and not we. Sometime ago, when you met in this place, and invited our brother, Mr. EVANS, to take upon him the pastoral care of you (having previously given yourselves up to the Lord, and to one another), and he accepted of that invitation, the work was done. You then ordained him ; and we, ministers of different christian churches, have only come at your request, to tell this congregation, and the public through them, what you have done.

This doctrine is contained in the sense of the word properly applied to this subject. It simply means, to *stretch forth the hand* ; and is never used but twice in the New Testament. *Acts* xv. 23. *2 Cor.* viii. 19. A reference to the mode of institution unto public offices, will make it clear to all of you. When any person was elected to any particular function, by any number of persons, they signified their
choice

choice of him by some *sign*; generally by *the stretching forth, or lifting up of the hand*; and hence the term, *stretching forth of the hand*, became an appropriate term for ordination; because, by that sign, they gave their suffrages, or votes, and thereby ordained to that office. This custom obtains in many popular meetings, as the mode of election, among us in the present day. You will see this interpretation of the word exemplified, in 2 Cor. viii. 19. "who was also *chosen* of the churches:" the word is the same as that in *Acts* xiv. 23. rendered *ordained*. The sense of which may thus be illustrated.—He was chosen—*ordained*, of the churches. How was it done? Why, they did it, when called upon to signify their choice, *by the lifting up, or stretching forth of their hand*. The churches did it—The churches ordained him—and to them the power belongs.

I would only just remark, that so gross is our conception of plain things, that frequently it is imagined, after a man has been ordained, he is something different from what he was before; or at least, that he possesses *something* which he did not possess before. In the established church, there is a propriety in this apprehension, because, when the Bishop ordains a priest, he says, "Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest in the church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands*." But, Brethren, we have no Holy Ghost to give. We would not join in the solemnities of this day, if we did not believe that our Brother has, with all its saving influences, received the Holy Ghost long before this time. Without the Spirit of God he has nothing to do with the christian ministry: but it is not man, but God, that gives it; therefore all that we can do is, to pray that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, would abundantly pour down upon him the Spirit of grace, that he may be an able minister of the New Testament, going before you in the spirit and power of Elias.

* Office for Ordination of Priests.

Thus, Brethren, in a very plain manner (and I have aimed at peculiar plainness), I have informed you of the scripture sense of the various articles, about which your minds are this day occupied. All I shall add is, ever keep up in your souls, a warm and energetic sense of the great and proper end designed by the connection which now subsists between you and your minister. Is it merely to support a party? No, Sirs, it is not *merely* to support a party. You have a higher, a nobler end in view, even the glory of the great God; and the reason why you particularly support one party, in preference to another, is, because you think that party has the most of truth on its side; and therefore God will get more glory by your attachment to it, than to any other. I am far from exclaiming against parties. I know not, how any man, possessing the smallest portion of common sense, and common honesty, can avoid being of a party. But there is a very material difference, between a person being a *mere* party man, and a man of a party. Brethren, my advice is, Examine the scriptures—inquire what is truth—be fully persuaded in your own minds—then act according to conscience; and, in the language of good Mr. Flavel, “Be sure your ground be good, and then be sure you maintain your ground.” That liberty which you take yourself, give to all who differ from you. “Every man is orthodox to himself.” Every thinking man considers himself right. Therefore, wherever you see the image of God, love that man as a brother, though he may differ from you in many of the circumstantialia of religion. Do him all the good in your power; and wherever you see a man, or a set of men, endeavouring to advance the Redeemer’s interest. May we never know any interest separate from that! I say, wherever such men are found, with them God speed. As far as you possibly can, help them to carry on the great work of increasing the dominion of Messiah among men, and the transcendently glorious work of saving souls. Thus, Brethren, may you live, shewing forth the praises

praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light ! When death shall dissolve the connection between body and soul, may the reality of the grace of God be evidenced in your triumph over the last enemy ! And in the last great day, may all of you, minister and people, without one absentee, occupy your thrones at the right hand of the glorious and everlasting Jesus, and so be for ever with him !

CON-

CONFESSION.

I.

I Believe, that there is but one only, living, and true God; possessed of infinite perfections. Omnipotent, Omniscient, and Omnipresent; Eternal, Immutable, Invisible, and Incomprehensible. A Being perfectly Holy, Infinitely Just, extensively Good, and inviolably Faithful and True. That He ordained from eternity whatsoever should come to pass. That He created all things by the word of his power, and governs all things by his unerring wisdom. That He is of himself all-sufficient, and independent of his Creatures; deriving no essential glory or happiness from them: the origin, and fountain, of all Being, and Blessedness. The rewarder of them who diligently seek him, and just in the punishments he inflicts upon all who disobey him.

II.

I believe, that there are three Persons in the Godhead; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; that these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.

III.

I believe, that although by the light of nature, assisted by the works of creation, and providence, God may be so far known, as to leave men without excuse; yet, these are not sufficient to communicate that knowledge of God, which is necessary to Salvation: It hath therefore pleased God,

God clearly, and fully, to reveal his mind and will in the holy scriptures, contained in the Books of the Old and New Testament; which were written by holy men, under the immediate direction, and inspiration of the Holy Ghost. That the canon of scripture is now complete, and that we look for no further revelation from God.

IV.

I believe, that the holy scriptures are a sufficient, and the only perfect rule of faith and practice. That faith in them, and obedience to them, do not depend upon any man, or professing church; but upon the authority of God alone. That the sublimity of the matter; the efficacy of the doctrines; the majesty, and simplicity of the style; the harmony of all the parts, with the fulfilment of the various prophecies, promises, and threatenings therein contained, establish their divine origin. That the infallible rule of interpretation of scripture, is the scripture itself; and the supreme Judge, by which all controversies in religion are to be determined. I believe, That God alone is Lord of the conscience, in matters of faith and worship; and that we are not bound to obey the commands of men, in things contrary to the word of God.

V

I believe, that although the scriptures are of divine origin, and a sufficient rule of faith and practice, yet, in consequence of the state of the human mind, through sin, the illumination of the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary, to the right understanding of the important truths therein contained. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

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VI.

I believe, that after God had made the heavens, and the earth, and formed all creatures, he created man; that he breathed into him the breath of life, and he became a living, rational, and immortal soul, endued with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after his own moral image. That man, thus completed, had the law of God written in his heart; possessed of power to obey; yet, under a possibility of falling, being left to the freedom of his own will, liable to change. That God did enter into a covenant of works with Adam, wherein life was promised upon condition of his perfect, and personal obedience: But being seduced by the subtilty of Satan, he transgressed the divine command, by eating of the forbidden fruit: that he thereby lost his original righteousness, the life of God, the image of God, and the enjoyment of God, and incurred his wrath, and displeasure.—That, by his disobedience, he became earthly, sensual, and devilish; prone to all evil, and averse from all good. That Adam, not being considered as a single person, but as the common, and federal head of all mankind, his sin was imputed to his posterity; and the same corrupt nature is, by ordinary generation, conveyed to all the human race. That in consequence of this original corruption, “every imagination of the thoughts of man’s heart is only evil continually.” That he is by nature, and through sin, destitute both of ability, and inclination, to obey God, or recover himself from his awful state of sin and misery.

VII.

I believe, that the recovery of man, both as to matter and means, entirely originated in the sovereign pleasure of Jehovah. That to effect this great and benevolent work, God did enter into a covenant of grace, to restore his people from the ruins of the Fall, and bring them into a
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state of salvation by a Redeemer. That this covenant was manifested to Adam after his fall, in a gracious promise made to him by Jehovah; and afterwards revealed, in various ways, to the Patriarchs, Prophets, and Believers, under the Old Testament dispensation.

VIII.

I believe, that God did, from all eternity, select some out of the fallen race of Adam to eternal life, "to the praise of the glory of his grace." That the only Redeemer of God's elect, is the Lord Jesus Christ; who being truly, and properly God, equal with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, in the fulness of time became man. That he took the human nature into union with the divine, and in the complex character of God and man, in one Christ, he obeyed the law, and suffered its penalty and curse, as the surety, and substitute of his people, and in their room and stead: by which he atoned for sin, satisfied divine Justice, appeased his Father's wrath, wrought out, and brought in, a perfect and everlasting righteousness, capable of justifying the ungodly; and opened an effectual door for the exercise of mercy, consistent with all the perfections of Jehovah. That he died, and was buried; arose from the dead the third day according to the scriptures, and, after frequently appearing to his Disciples, ascended into heaven; and there, as the compassionate High-priest, and prevalent Intercessor of his people, he now represents their persons, presents their sacrifices, and pleads their cause; and that he will come again the second time without sin to salvation.

IX.

I believe, that as all men are by nature children of wrath; and, as transgressors, under the curse of the law; alienated from God, and justly exposed to eternal punishment. *Justification* and *Sanctification*, are absolutely necessary to the
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enjoyment of God in this world, and eternal glory in the next.

That *Justification* consists in an acquittal from curse and condemnation, with all the final consequences of sin. That it is obtained through the righteousness of Christ freely imputed to the soul by Jehovah, and received by faith; by which believers become personally interested in Jesus Christ, and the blessings of Salvation: and being thus considered complete in Christ, are adjudged worthy of eternal life. I believe that Salvation is not attainable in any other way; "for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Not by works, for "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight," but alone through faith in the righteousness of Christ. "By him all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses:" not by the merit of faith, any more than by the merit of works; for "by grace we are saved through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God."

I believe, that *Sanctification* is the work of the Holy Ghost upon the soul; that it begins in regeneration, and is carried on by the indwelling, and operation of the Spirit in the hearts of the regenerate, and principally in the use of means; through which believers are made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

X.

I believe, that although good works have no share, either in obtaining the favour of God, or procuring the pardon of sin, yet they are necessary, as the fruits and evidences of true and lively faith; that they tend to glorify God, and justify our faith before men. That although believers are delivered from the law, as a covenant of works; yet they are under the law to Christ, and under obligations to observe the law as a rule of conduct. That their obedience to the will of God, does not proceed from
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any power inherent in themselves, but from the influence of the Holy Spirit, "who worketh in them, to will, and to do, of his good pleasure."

XI.

I believe, that being once united to Christ by faith, and justified through his righteousness; though believers may, through the force of temptation, and remaining depravity, be permitted to fall, thereby lose the joys of salvation for a time, and be left to doubt their interest in the blessings thereof; yet, they cannot fall from a state of grace and favour with God, or finally perish; but that all true believers shall be restored, persevere to the end, and be eternally saved.

XII.

I believe, that there are two Sacraments appointed by Christ in his church, to be observed to the end of time: Baptism, and the Supper of the Lord.

That Baptism is an initiatory ordinance, by which we are admitted into God's visible church; and is a sign, or seal, of regeneration and pardon, administered by water, in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. I believe, that the proper subjects of Baptism, are such who profess faith in Christ, and obedience to him, and also the Infant seed of such professing believers; and that pouring, or sprinkling, is the mode most consistent with the word of God, and the practice of the primitive churches.

I believe, that the Lord's Supper was instituted by Jesus Christ the same night in which he was betrayed: that it was intended to be a standing memorial of the love of Christ to his people, and of their obligations to him. That by giving and receiving bread and wine, we commemorate the death of Christ; and that it is a pledge of our communion with him, and with each other, as members of his mystical body. That this sacrament is to be considered as a sacred

oath, and obligation, to be found in all the ordinances and commands of the Lord blameless.

XIII.

I believe, that the bodies of men, after death, return to dust and corruption ; but the soul, being immortal, ascends to God who gave it, to receive according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or bad ; and doth immediately enter either into happiness or misery.

XIV.

I believe in the Resurrection of the dead at the last day, and in a Judgment to come. That the bodies of all who die in union with Christ, shall be raised from the dead, like unto his glorious body. That body and soul, shall be reunited, and enter into the joy of their Lord. That unbelievers shall also be raised ; their bodies be reunited to their souls ; that body and soul shall, by an awful, and irrevocable sentence, be banished from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power ; and be consigned, by a righteous Judge, to eternal punishment in Hell, without a possibility of redemption, or the least alleviation of their misery. " These shall go away into everlasting punishment ; but the righteous into life eternal."

AN
EXHORTATION
GIVEN TO
The Rev. JONATHAN EVANS,
AT HIS ORDINATION.

THAT part of the present service, which I have been pressed to undertake—*An Exhortation to the minister*, might well be spared on this occasion; for I am not to address a young man, just entering upon the ministry, and unacquainted with its duties and difficulties; but a brother, who has for many years been employed in the work, with increasing reputation to himself, and usefulness to the Church: nevertheless, as he is now taking upon himself *the pastoral office* in this society, a few thoughts upon the spirit and temper with which it ought to be discharged, may not be improper; and these I shall deduce from a single sentence of St. Paul, in his

2d Epistle to the CORINTHIANS, i. 12.

SIMPLICITY AND GODLY SINCERITY.

WITH these admirable dispositions, the Apostle and his fellow-labourers, had conducted themselves in their ministry at large, and especially at Corinth; a reflection upon which, afforded him the most sensible pleasure: which he thus expresses—“*For our rejoicing is this,*
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the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.

Permit me then, my dear brother, from these words, to recommend to you

Simplicity and godly sincerity, in the exercise of your ministry.

These words are nearly allied in their signification; and instead of a critical and accurate distinction between them, I shall refer the first, to *purity of design*, and the latter to *uprightness in the execution of it*: and,

I. *As to simplicity, or purity of design*—that “unity,” or “singleness of heart,” in aim and intention; that freedom from base and sinister designs, which ought to prevail in the soul of a christian minister. And this I shall consider, both with respect to his first entrance on the sacred office, and his constant discharge of it.

1. It is of vast importance that we begin well; that we set out right; that we possess this simplicity and purity of intention, when we become ministers. How has “the ministry been blamed;” how has the church been injured, by men, who have entered upon this great work with base and worldly designs!

Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priests offices, that I may eat a piece of bread, 1 Sam. ii. 36. Such was the disgrace to which the sons of Eli would be reduced; and, in this way, the ministry is often disgraced now. The expectation of a good living, is the principal reason why many devote their sons to the church, even where there appear to be neither suitable qualifications for the profession, nor inclination towards it. This, however, can rarely be a temptation among protestant dissenters, whose ministers too often are confined to stipends, scarcely equal to those of common mechanics.

The love of fame and popularity, may be an inducement to others. It is gratifying to an ambitious mind, to be elevated a few steps above the congregation; to be president in public assemblies; to be considered in the light of a teacher; to be called Rabbi, Rabbi; and to be looked up to as a servant of God, and a ruler among his people. No doubt, numbers have entered into the church with these views, base and mean as they are. "Verily they *have* their reward;" they have it *now*, in the perishing breath of applause: but we tremble to think, what sort of reward they must have at the great day!

Others, probably, look to the ministry chiefly as favourable to learned leisure; to a contemplative and retired way of life; as affording convenient opportunity for mental improvement, and the acquirement of polite science. This, though not so grovelling and mean a motive as the former, is unworthy the servant of Christ; all whose pursuits and gratifications, must be kept subservient to his Master's work.

But he, who like the Apostle Paul, possesses gospel simplicity, "desireth the office of a bishop," with the very same views, with which the blessed God instituted that office; and for those very purposes for which Christ received "gifts for men," namely, "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." He comes into the church, with the same design that Christ came from heaven—"To seek and to save that which was lost." "Wo be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock!" See *Ezek.* xxxiv. 2, &c.

The glory of God in Christ, as manifested in the conversion of immortal souls and in their preparation for heaven, is the grand, leading, prevailing view of a true minister of the gospel. He knows somewhat of the value of a soul; and he wishes to be a minister, in humble hope
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of being instrumental in saving souls. This is indeed “an heroic passion;” derided by infidels, but applauded by Christ. He who considers, with Dr. Doddridge, “that the eternal welfare of one immortal soul is of more consequence than the temporal prosperity of a whole nation;” will think with Dr. Owen, that “*the saving of one soul is worth the preaching of the gospel to a whole nation for many years.*”

2. A minister having begun, is to proceed, with this *simplicity*; and not “begin in the Spirit and end in the flesh,” as many have done. St. Paul complains, that even in his day—*All sought their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s.*—“The greater part of christian ministers, compared with Timothy, whom he commends, were too selfish and pusillanimous, and rather solicitous about their own temporal ease, honour, and safety, than willing to expose themselves to fatigue and danger, to promote the cause of Christ.”—(*See Guyse in loc.*)

Simplicity, is here opposed to *fleshly wisdom*, or, in modern phrase—*Priestcraft*; that carnal policy, which contrives, by a thousand tricks, to impose upon the understandings of men, to domineer over their consciences, to obtain worldly power, and to command admiration. *Priestcraft!* hateful name! but it is now unmasked, detected, detested; and let it perish with Babylon, which gave it birth! Wicked men may attempt to degrade the whole ministerial office, under pretence of discarding *Priestcraft*; but we have nothing to fear, while *Simplicity* prevails in our conduct, and while thereby we commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.

We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus’s sake. So said the Apostle Paul of himself and his colleagues; and so we desire, in sincerity, to say. Not our own interest, nor reputation, nor notions, nor passions; but what relates to the adorable person, the gracious offices, the glorious righteousness, the spiritual and everlasting kingdom of God’s dear Son.

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I shall not need to particularize the several doctrines of grace, and duties of holiness, which ought to be the themes of your preaching; for you have now solemnly stated, and publicly promised to maintain them, all your days.

Only let us remember that we are always to do this with simplicity.—We serve him who searcheth the heart, and considers more the *motive* than the manner of our performances. *Jehu's* zeal was flaming and useful; but, as to himself, all was spoiled by want of simplicity; he courted human applause, when he cried, *Come, see my zeal*. Our good works may be done so as to be seen, that God may be glorified; but not done in order that they may be seen. And, according to our proportion of faith, we shall think little of the praise of men; content now, with the testimony of our conscience, and hoping for the future testimony of our Judge.

I proceed, *Secondly*, to speak of that **GODLY SINCERITY** with which we are to execute our office; and, for the sake of memory, let me recommend Sincerity—In the *heart*—in the *closet*—in the *study*—in the *pulpit*—in the *parlour*—and in the *world*.

1. *In the heart.*

Sincerity has been unduly exalted, by some, into the very place of Christ; and made the ground of hope for salvation, as well as an apology for a thousand errors in judgment and practice: nevertheless, it is essential to the very being of a christian; how much more to that of a minister! That the heart “be right with God,” and “sound in his statutes,” is indispensably necessary in the servant of Christ; nor can the want of it be compensated, by the most brilliant abilities, natural or acquired.

2. Closely connected with this, is, *Sincerity in the closet*; or intimate converse with God, in private retirement and devotion. A minister of Christ, is styled, in the New Testament, as a prophet was in the Old, *a man of God*; a man

devoted to God ; a man, who, like Moses, converses with God ; and, like him, obtains by that converse, a lustre of holiness, visible to all. This was from the beginning held so necessary to the christian ministry, that the Apostles themselves, wished to be excused from the secular concerns of the church, and care of the poor—" that they might give themselves continually to prayer." How much the great Apostle of the Gentiles abounded in this duty, is evident from his epistles ; wherein we find the welfare of the churches, and of individuals, engaged his daily petitions at the throne of grace.

" *The watchman of Ephraim was with my God ;*" so the false prophets, mentioned by *Hosea*, pretended to have been, in imitation of the true ; plainly intimating, how necessary it was, to the character of a true prophet, to be much with God ; and this is as necessary for us, in our ordinary work, as it was for those who were extraordinarily inspired.

The most eminent ministers have been the most remarkable for prayer. That noble champion of the Reformation, *Martin Luther*, is said to have devoted three hours of every day to devotional exercises ; and the holy Martyr *Bradford* used to study on his knees.

The story of that great man, Mr. *Bruce*, of Scotland, is well known. The congregation was waiting for him, beyond the usual time, on a Lord's-day afternoon. A messenger was sent to hasten him ; who, coming to his study door, heard his voice, earnestly saying, " I protest I will not go without thee." Unwilling to disturb, what he thought, a conversation, he reported, that the minister seemed not likely to come yet, for he was declaring he would not stir, unless a person, who seemed very reluctant would come with him.—At length, he came ; when, that peculiar solemnity, unction, and power, attended his words, which left no doubt on the minds of the great auditory, who
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He was, with whom Mr. *Bruce*, like another *Israel*, had wrestled and prevailed.

This spirit of prayer, my honoured and dear brethren, is what *we* want : possessed of this, we should, probably, see wonders of grace renewed, and converts “ flying to Christ, as doves to their windows.” And this is the only way to obtain that *grace* our text speaks of, by which we may conduct ourselves with simplicity and godly sincerity.

3. *The same sincerity will direct us in the study* ; in the choice of a subject, and in our meditation upon it. Our selection of a text, will be with a sincere desire to profit the souls of men ; and not, by a single word, or letter, culled out for its singularity and oddity, to aim at surprising the “ gaping crowd,” and laying a trap for their applause, that we have preached on a text none ever thought of before, and have got a world of matter out of a nutshell.

4. *Sincerity in the study will accompany us to the pulpit.* Awful place ! not the seat of civil judgment itself is so awful. And O, what seriousness becomes the man, who undertakes to declare the mind of the most high God ; to stand between the living and dead ; to distinguish between sinners and saints ; and to anticipate, in the consciences of men, the sentences of the great decisive day. Sincerity must here dictate our whole discourse. Sincere regard to the will of God, as expressed in the scriptures ; and sincere love to the souls of our fellow-men. This godly sincerity will oblige us to declare, *only* the word of God, and to declare *the whole* of it.

Nothing but the word of God. “ What is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord ? ” “ Having then gifts—whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith.” This is our only rule : Not the dogmas of

churches, councils or synods ; nor our own fancies and notions ; but the pure unadulterated word of the gospel.

The whole word.—Paul rejoiced in the testimony of his conscience—that he “ kept back nothing that was profitable ;” that “ he had not shunned to declare all the counsel of God.” Blessed be God, we are not forbidden by persecuting statutes, nor royal injunctions, to preach the whole truth. We are under no such restraint as that which James I. laid on the clergy—“ That no preacher, of what title soever, under the degree of a Bishop, or a Dean, at the least, presume to preach on the deep points of Predestination, Election,” &c. Sincerity will not suffer us to be silent upon these, or any other points of doctrine or duty, however distasteful they may happen to be, to some of our hearers. Should a temptation of this sort occur to a minister, he must not hesitate whether it be better to obey God or man ; for, if we aim merely to please man, and withhold the truth, lest we offend a rich subscriber, or a weighty member, how can we be the servants of Christ ? Nay, we must not “ fear a great multitude, nor let the reproach of families terrify us,” so as to make us “ keep silence,” when it is our duty to speak out. *Job xxxi. 34.*

This Sincerity, while it secures the *matter* of our preaching, will have an influence on the *manner* of it too. Should we notice those who buy and sell in the market ; or those who pursue their pleasures at the theatre ; or even those who are quarrelling in the street ; we should have no doubt that they are sincere in their desires of gain, amusement or revenge. And shall the frigid manner of a gospel minister, leave a doubt on the minds of his hearers, whether he is in earnest or not—whether he believes what he preaches or not ? God forbid !

Sincerity will dictate *plainness of method and style*. Method is so useful to memory, that it is cruel to conceal it from those who wish to profit ; and the recapitulation of the
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plan of a sermon, at the close of it, has a good effect. And as to plainness of style, it will naturally flow from a heart impressed with the subject, and sincerely desirous that others may be impressed with it too; which they cannot be, unless it be understood. St. Paul preferred speaking "five words for edification," to the display of the most unusual gifts; and preferred the plain words of the Holy Ghost, to the enticing words of human wisdom.

5. Shall I add a word on *Sincerity in the Parlour*? I mean in pastoral visits; whether in the well-furnished parlour, the busy workshop, or the humble cottage. "From house to house" St. Paul taught the word, with tears. This is a difficult, generally neglected, but an important and useful branch of the pastoral office. It is sometimes particularly painful, when we are called to a sick chamber and a dying bed; when we visit dubious characters, or such as are openly profane. Humanity would bid us whisper peace, but Sincerity insists upon faithful dealing.

6. Sincerity must regulate *our whole conduct in the world*.

To the church we must be "an *Example*, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity; we must follow after righteousness, godliness, love, patience, meekness."

And it is necessary that we have "a good report of them that are without, lest we fall into reproach, and the snare of the devil." Ministers are observed by all men with a critical, and by some, with a malignant eye. They watch for our halting, and would be glad to gain an apology for their own sin, by quoting our example. We must therefore avoid all evil, not only sincerely, but scrupulously. "The wife of Cæsar must not be suspected!" said a great Roman. A gospel minister must not be suspected, say we. This is peculiarly necessary in the present day, when all possible contempt is thrown upon religion. The enemies of revelation will triumph in arguments drawn from the insincerity,

sincerity, hypocrisy, and worldly spirit of teachers : and, as the poet says,

“ Each shallow pate, that cannot read your name,
“ Can read your life, and will be proud to blame.”

Our lives, then, must be living sermons ; and so, accord with, exemplify, and adorn the holy doctrine we teach.

This is an outline of the spirit of a christian minister, and but an outline. The scriptures in general, and the epistles to Timothy and Titus in particular, largely describe his whole character, and duty. And these, I doubt not, will be your frequent guides.

I shall conclude, by reminding you of the consequences of being *unfaithful* on the one hand, and of being *sincere* on the other.

It is required in Stewards that they be faithful ; and an account will assuredly be taken of our stewardship. “ We watch for souls ;” and if, through our wilful misconduct, the souls of men should perish—if it should appear that we have not “ warned the wicked man”—awful words—“ his blood,” saith the Lord, “ his blood will I require at thine hand.”

On the other hand, what encouragements present themselves, to excite our utmost diligence—SUCCESS, SATISFACTION, and REWARD.

Success. This, indeed, depends on the sovereign pleasure of God, and is afforded to his ministers, in various degrees. But, when they are faithful, fervent, laborious and consistent, some success, generally follows. And what a prize is one soul gained ! one soul, won from the kingdom of Satan, and translated into that of Christ ! But many, we trust, will be given you.

Satisfaction ; whether you succeed or not. Satisfaction, even if you should meet with scorn, contempt, severity, and persecution. And, if Infidelity prevail, “ cruel mockings,”

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at least, may be expected. Your sincerity particularly, may be called in question. “ But our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience.”

Reward.—“ Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” God is not unrighteous, to forget the work of faith, and the labour of love. Those who renounce the emoluments of the world for his sake, and devote their time and talents to his work, shall not go without their reward. A reward, wholly of grace, after all ; the glory procured by a Saviour’s blood, which is prepared for all who love him, will be heightened to faithful ministers, by the addition of saved souls, which shall be so many gems in the crown : and the public Euge of Jesus Christ (well done, good and faithful servant), will afford an ample recompense for all our studies, and prayers, and tears, and labours. May this blessed reward be yours, and ours ! Amen.

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THE Preacher apologizes to those Readers, who were also Hearers, on this occasion. If they should find here considerable enlargement on some points, which were but slightly touched in the delivery, it may readily be accounted for. His feelings for a numerous auditory, many of whom had been already in the Chapel near four hours; and among them, many persons of a weak and delicate constitution, constrained him to abridge his reflections whenever he found opportunity. But they are now presented with the whole he intended to say.

Many inconveniences result from the unavoidable length of time occupied by an Ordination Service. The different parts cannot be attended to, with such solemnity and enlargement, as the case seems to require, in much less than four hours. This is a period much too long for some of our most attentive hearers, to listen with composedness of mind. It frequently happens, that these opportunities are purposely reserved for the Summer, on account of the conveniency of distant hearers. And in such circumstances, the heat of the season conspires, with the largeness of the audience, to increase the evil. How distressing to a feeling Preacher, to see the visible restlessness of over-fatigue pervading the whole congregation! Persons of nervous habits, accustomed to frequent refreshment, are ready to faint. Perhaps some of the female part of the auditory actually swoon; and the attention of surrounding friends is drawn from the solemnity itself, to the unhappy victim of its tediousness. Others, by the paleness of their countenance, indicate how much more *willing* than *able*, they are to continue so long in a Public Assembly. Nor are these the greatest evils—for the Ministers, after all, find the time too contracted to administer such advice, and clothe it with such arguments, as the occasion would suggest. They are obliged therefore to abridge. And, in tenderness to their hearers' bodies, some of the most weighty concerns with their minds, are either omitted, or slightly mentioned. After the Ordination at Foleshill, these topics were talked over; and it appeared to the Ministers present, that the whole might be very well remedied, by adopting a new plan on these occasions. Let the service be attended to in two parts. In the morning, let it conclude with the ordination prayer. The Congregation might disperse, and dine in less than two hours; and return again, and hear the Charge to the Minister, and Sermon to the People, delivered. By so doing, the Preachers might have sufficient time for enlargement, and the Hearers would attend with pleasure.

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THERE yet remains one part of the solemn services of this day to be attended to. The nature and privileges of a Christian Church have been stated: Your Pastor has made a good profession of his faith: We have united in earnest prayer to God upon his behalf: and the principles which ought to form the basis of a gospel minister's character have been explained. It devolves upon me to address you (the church of God in this place), and enforce those duties which are now more peculiarly incumbent upon you. And notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, I shall hope for your favourable attention, to a subject so very important. The passage I have chosen for a motto to the present discourse you will find—

REVELATION iii. 22.

HE THAT HATH AN EAR, LET HIM HEAR WHAT
THE SPIRIT SAITH UNTO THE CHURCHES.

I N the church of God, Jesus Christ is the only Lord, and Law-giver. Fallen men stand in no other relationship, naturally, to the great God, than that of condemned criminals, to a righteous Sovereign and Judge. But in the Christian Religion we are taught to consider all believers

as reconciled to God by the mediation of his Son. These persons are put, more immediately than others, under his government. He reigns in their affections. He has prescribed regulations for their conduct. But this kingdom of his, is purely spiritual: "My kingdom is not of this world," *John* xviii. 36. It is not founded on worldly principles; not attended with worldly pomp; not supported by worldly power. The subjects of his gracious authority, are a people very little known, and less regarded. They are scattered abroad upon the earth, extremely diversified in name, sentiment, and practice (in things indifferent), but all united in the participation of a renewed heart. Very worthy of attention is a paragraph of good *Cotton Mather* to this effect: "I would have you lay aside all
 " thoughts of a foundation for union among the professors
 " of Christianity, but what shall be in the unity of the
 " Spirit; or that work of the Holy Spirit on the hearts of
 " men, that inclines them to glorify God with an obedi-
 " ence to his will revealed in his word.—Other founda-
 " tion can no man lay!"

Wherever certain persons of this description associate together for religious purposes—taking Christ for their master—the New Testament for their code of laws—and seriously attending his ordinances, they are denominated a church of Christ.

The great body of christians is distributed into vast numbers of such societies; and therefore addressed by our text in the plural number: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the *Churches*."

It seems to be presumed in these words that some, even in the churches, may not have an *ear*; or, that they are so wilfully deaf, and hardened against the truth, that reproofs, encouragements, promises, and precepts, are to them, equally without effect. By whatever means such
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have crept into the church, their behaviour will not be ornamental ; their continuance is very precarious.

“ He that hath an ear,” is the man who not only listens, but understands, and obeys. *A spiritual understanding* is a capacity to discern and improve the things that are of God. It is the gift of the Spirit. And *obedience* is the surest proof of its existence. Every individual who is a partaker of this benefit, is the person to whom this passage of scripture belongs.

“ *The Spirit,*” who speaks, is that great Spirit under whose inspiration the holy writings were indited. He is called the “ Spirit of Christ :” for it is his peculiar work to take of the things of Christ, and shew them unto us, John xvi. 15. Whatsoever, therefore, the Spirit saith to the churches, is to be regarded as the will of Christ our Head ; and the unalterable rule of our conduct. It is this consideration, which reconciles me to the part you have assigned to me, in the solemn services of this day. If your duty as a church, was merely a discretionary thing, it would be arrogance in me to give an opinion on the subject. But this matter is settled. The Spirit hath spoken in his word ; and I have only to exhort you to-day, brethren, to listen to his instructive voice. In this view, I perceive a peculiar advantage in my present situation : for I did not ascend this pulpit, humbly to solicit your attention, to a well-intended piece of advice ; but authoritatively to demand it to those laws of God’s house, which more especially regard your present circumstances.

The Spirit saith many things to the churches, relative to the *doctrines they profess*—the *discipline they maintain*—and the practice to which they adhere. Let us spend a few minutes in considering each of these articles.

We begin with DOCTRINES. At this time the sacred principles which most of us present espouse, are growing into disesteem. It is not to our purpose to trace the cause of this
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evil. Bold, but inexperienced, and untaught advocates for the doctrines of grace, have, by unaccountable distortions, injured the system they designed to defend. The supine indifference of others, who possess more mature experience, and better judgment; but are indolent in their researches after truth; may have also contributed a large proportion to the present advancement of Infidelity. Certainly the Bible insists upon our searching after an extensive acquaintance with religious truths. To suppose a man may be a uniform, and useful christian, without understanding the doctrines of christianity, is to degrade humanity to the order of clocks; which strike at their appointed hour, without the least consciousness of their own noise, or motion.

The following passages may be considered as a sample of the mind of the Spirit on this point. "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me," John v. 39. "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," John viii. 32. "Though an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you—let him be accursed," Gal. i. 8. "When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the Oracles of God," Heb. v. 12. "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed," 2 John 10. "Ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints, Jude 3.

From this small collection of texts, you, who are members of a christian church, are taught that it is your duty

To inquire after Truth. Examine for yourselves. Rely not on any man's round assertions. Nor think it enough that others know, while you are ignorant. But where shall I send you to inquire? It is fashionable to investigate the principles of christianity, by reading the insolent sophistry of assuming Infidels and Atheists. Every little witling, desti-
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tute of five grains of true information, but who has read a Page of Voltaire, and a Pamphlet of Thomas Paine, swollen with conceit, the natural offspring of ignorance, takes upon him the office of a Censor, and condemns the Holy Book of God. Shall I advise you to seek knowledge at such sources as these? No—I would as soon send you to the tutelar Deities of France—Fortune—Fame—Honour—and an hundred more, whose names adorn a Parisian Almanack, to be taught the way to eternal life.

But come, search the scriptures daily; they will bear the strictest test: and he shall be your worthiest member, who has most of *Bible knowledge* in his *head*, and most of *Bible principles* in his *heart*!

It is your duty to be tenacious of the Truth. No abilities in preachers, however popular; no eloquence, however persuasive; no name, though universally revered, may be permitted for a moment to make you careless about the doctrines of the Bible; or induce you to give a favourable attention to obvious errors! *You must also be Teachers of the Truth.* You have a Pastor to instruct you; and you must be also Pastors to instruct others. Some of you have intimate friends and acquaintance, and others have families. To shed some glimmering beams of heavenly light in the dark circle of your connections is your duty, and it will be your honour.

You are to contend for the Truth. Not tamely relinquish the doctrine of the Cross, upon every sophistical attack of pretended reasoners; but earnestly insist on the superior excellency of evangelical principles, to cheer the heart under adversity—and, in all circumstances, to direct and sanctify the conduct.

But in your attachment to certain doctrines, take heed that they are clearly derived from the sacred scriptures. And that you understand them in the same way in which the inspired penmen designed. You may judge of this by
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the tendency of your opinions, and their influence upon your conduct. If they are accompanied with a proud, selfish spirit, and will comport with a loose, disorderly walk, your heated imagination may prompt you to contend for them with earnestness; but I assure you, they are not the doctrines of God's Word. *These* "teach us to deny ungodliness."

Let us further examine, what the Spirit saith to the churches on the subject of DISCIPLINE.

Discipline, is the orderly management of the whole body—and every particular member. The total neglect, or partial administration of church government, is a grand corroding evil, at the root of vital holiness in all our churches. The Lord help you to prove, in this evil day, an exception to this general description!

It would be impossible, in the compass of a moderate sermon, to bring forward all the rules given by the Spirit for this purpose. I will therefore content myself with urging a few upon your consideration.

Attend strictly upon all occasions, where the presence of the church is expected, or required. These meetings in our churches are usually confined to the denominations of Sermons, Sacraments, Prayer-meetings, and a Monthly Assembling of the Church together, to perform those acts which require the concurrence of the whole body. Great care should be taken that these assemblies be not too frequent; else attendance on them will be a burden; and perhaps more private duties will be infringed upon. In later days I think our public exercises have grown wildly luxuriant. The multitude of our sermons pleases the taste of curious hearers, but leaves too little room for serious reflection. It reminds me of a thick umbrageous wood, whose rustling leaves impress the spectator's mind with pleasure; but they exclude the enlivening beams of the summer sun, and for the most part are fruitless.

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But supposing our times of worship adjusted with wisdom, where will you find a proper excuse for non-attendance, except in cases of impossibility? The Spirit saith, "For-sake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is," Heb. x. 25. And "*the whole church*" ought to "*come together into one place,*" 1 Cor. xiv. 23.

Yet why should that be enforced as an act of necessity, which is intirely for your own gain; and should be your chiefest pleasure? Are you not one family? Where should you go for food or pleasure else? I would fain suppose, that every pious member of a gospel church, can sing in the assembly of the saints, with Dr. Watts,

Here would I find a settled rest,
While others go and come :
No more a stranger or a guest,
But like a child at home.

Personally reprove sin ; nor suffer it to rest upon the head of a fellow member. On occasions of offence, you need not, you ought not, to be forward to report the matter. That is the business of the worldling. But by faithful reproof the sinner may be restored. Every member should be of David's mind: "Let the righteous smite me, and it shall be a kindness," Psal. cxli. 5. And in cases of necessity, every faithful brother should be ready to grant the request.

Be affectionate in all your deportment towards your Pastor. A faithful minister has at all times a claim upon the regard of his people. If his time, and talents, are devoted to your improvement; it is certainly your duty to shew a grateful sense of the favour. The man whose reading—studying—and Prayers through the week, are to promote your interest; and whose strength on the Lord's-day is offered a sacrifice upon the service of your faith; may justly demand more than common veneration and respect. But a Galatian spirit too much prevails. There are those who *once would have plucked out their eyes for their minister; but*
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now never hear his name without disgust. And this alteration has arisen not from unfaithfulness in him, but from caprice in themselves. But, if I should ever live to hear it said, that such was the case with the Church at *Folehill*, I would not hesitate to pronounce you, of all professors, the most ungrateful!—To the labours of our dear brother—you owe, under God, your existence as a Church; and this comfortable house in which you assemble. I sincerely pray, that here you may long enjoy the privilege of his ministry; long may his work be attended with unusual success!—Remember the words of the Apostle: “Know them that labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and esteem them very highly in love for their works sake. And be at peace among yourselves. *1 Thess. v. 12, 13.* If you add to this, a *general spirit of subordination prevailing among you*, you will then have the principal objects of Church discipline, comprised in the few observations we have made. It is a lamentable fact, that generally, as soon as a Church arrives at a tolerable degree of prosperity and happiness—there appears some *Diotrephes*—the plague of the Pastor—the disturber of the flock—and the curse of all his connections!—The only antidote against such poisonous weeds—is rigidly to watch the garden—mark their first appearance—and tread the pernicious intruder down. But should he still arise and grow—spare not, but root him up, and hurl him into yonder wilderness—where he may live or die, unheeded by the peaceful Church.—Pride, is the bane of true happiness. It manifests itself in needless jealousies, and bitter contentions. These disturb the peace of christians, and hinder the usefulness of the minister. Remember the Apostle’s analogy between the natural, and the spiritual body, *1 Cor. xii.* and attend to his exhortation—“to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think,” *Rom. xii. 3.*

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This discipline is the institution of Jesus Christ ; and as such demands our punctual attention. The steady observance of it was the beauty of the primitive Churches ; and its loss, the inlet of tyrannical usurpations, and anti-christian errors. For the want of it, *Ichabod* may be written upon the professing world at the present day. “ The glory is *indeed* departed from Israel.”

“ He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches,” upon the subject of religious PRACTICE. I mean by Practice, that orderly course of personal, and relative duties, which every member of a Christian Church ought to be exercised in. Undoubtedly every one of you ought to be a Christian. And every Christian should be a uniformly pious character. The injury which the church will sustain by the faulty conduct of individuals, is incalculable. Therefore every one must be *habituated to Prayer*. The scriptures strongly insist upon the necessity of this duty. I do not indeed remember, that it has fixed upon any certain times when this duty should be performed. The passages, which assert, “ Men ought always to pray,” and exhort us to “ Pray without ceasing,” certainly indicate that this duty should be attended to frequently. David engaged in devotional exercises seven times a day. Daniel regularly retired three times a day for prayer, although he was a courtier. Upon the whole, it seems you cannot fully justify your profession, unless you maintain a secret intercourse with God in your closet. If you neglect thus dealing with God in *private*, it will soon discover itself by its-unwholesome effects in your *outward behaviour*.

While you are bending your knees at a throne of grace, you will not forget the *House of God*. “ Pray for the peace of Jerusalem ; they shall prosper that love thee !” Surely if you feel yourselves at home in the best sense, while here in the midst of the congregation you drink of the streams of

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living water, which flow from the sanctuary of God; you will sometimes exclaim

My soul shall pray for Zion still,
While life and breath remains :
There my best friends, my kindred dwell,
There God my Saviour reigns !

Let *Integrity* and *Justice* be displayed in all your dealings with men. Remember that rule laid down by our Lord—"Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them." Did every professor live according to this maxim, the blasphemous reproaches of many an infidel would be completely silenced. It would be greatly for the honour of the church of God, if professors were more minutely exact in all their common dealings. The smallest deviation from equity in christians, is noticed with more asperity by the world, than the most enormous and constant offences of their companions.

Maintain a regular attention to *religion in your families*. You, who are called the Heads of families—ought to be such in reality. Let your authority be exercised to prevent sin, and to promote godliness. Every house among you, into which our dear brother can enter, and behold its godly order, regularity; will afford a sort of sacred triumph to his soul. There he will see, he has not laboured in vain, nor spent his strength for nought. What exquisite sensations must that pastor feel, who beholds among his flock, parents, children, and servants, just what he wishes them to be. With what transport will he say, as Paul of the Thessalonians—"For ye are our glory and joy !" 1 Thes. ii. 20. *Keep a constant watch over your temper*. Connections in the church afford repeated occasions to try the dispositions of men. You will need much forbearance—much sympathy and compassion.

Remember, your fellow christians have an equal right to expect the exercise of these dispositions towards themselves,

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as you have to claim it from them. Think on your blessed Immanuel, who did not despise his disciples for their ignorance : and though he blamed, yet he pitied their weakness, and forgave their faults. The infirmities of our brethren, are the test of our love. We must not expect perfection in any character below. Therefore, " let us love one another ; for love is of God : and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love," 1 John iv. 7, 8.

I will only mention farther, the exercise of *liberality*. Various objects connected with a church state, will call upon you to contribute a part of your worldly property. This Jesus Christ demands not as a *favour*, but as a *debt*. You received your all from him. You owe all unto him. When therefore his cause, or his poor, stand in need of temporal aid ; you are not to turn away your face and say, I have ways enough of my own, for the employment of my property. No—you are to give with cheerfulness—yea, you are to give with thankfulness, that God will accept of your service. You are to say with David, " But who am I—that I should be able to offer—after this sort ? for all things come of thee, O LORD, and of thine own have I given unto thee !" 1 Chr. xxix. 14.—" But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up the bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him ?" 1 John iii. 17. Christianity has recently altered its nature ; or such a man cannot be a christian. I testify unto you this day, that the covetous man shall not enter the kingdom of God.

A subject is sometimes best illustrated by contrast. I would not then have you like that church, where the members are haughty—worldly—or disunited. Whose pride and ignorance have deafened them to every remonstrance ; whose affections are riveted to the world, while they maintain a kind of outward relation to the church ; and among whom no cordial tie of fraternal love subsists. There the
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minister has become, a very bugbear. His presence disliked, His reproofs despised. The work is retarded by a fatal indifference to the various points of christian duty. Empty seats, and cold neglect, at length drive the man of God, heart-broken, from his charge, to seek a soil more prosperous, wherein to sow the gospel seed. While the barren few he leaves behind, sit careless down, and fold their hands to sleep.

May you be the very reverse! Here may you always flock with willing feet. Your pastor's voice, like a well-tuned instrument, with grateful melody attract your ears. Be it your great concern to hold up his hands; to encourage his heart; and make him joyful in his work. Submit yourselves to one another, in the Lord. And walk holily and honourably in your respective stations. Then your church-state will never be dissolved. But in rotation, you will be exalted to the privileged assembly of believers, who live near the Lamb. There to behold his face, and dwell with saints and angels, who ever grow in humility and purity. Amen.

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